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THE MODERNIST-FUNDAMENTALIST CONTROVERSY

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AND

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I: THE MODERNIST-FUNDAMENTALIST CONTROVERSY

"In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." But what is essential and what is non-essential? That question is splitting the Christian Churches into two parties. Bishop Lawrence of Massachusetts, President Faunce of Brown University, Harry Emerson Fosdick are progressives; Bishop Manning of New York, Dr. Stratton, Mr. William Jennings Bryan represent the conservative leadership of their respective communions.

This controversy is between fundamentalists and modernists as they are popularly called. Dr. Tyson claims that the issue is between the open and the closed mind. The daily press, though sometimes flippant, is often discriminating. "Some think they are Fundamentalists because they believe their enemies are going to hell," while of the Modernists they say, "The open mind may be too porous to hold a conviction." Bigotry is the common danger of intense and confident orthodoxy, while the vice of liberalism is an easy-going indifference to austere moral and religious convictions.

Principal Jacks of Oxford tells us that this cleavage runs through all society and through every man. There is a coward and a hero in each. The coward is out for safety; he is always conservative. The hero is out for victory; he is progressive. Dr. Henry VanDyke joins Bishop Manning in repudiating the terms most frequently used, "fundamentalist and modernist," as having too many different meanings to be really descriptive of the two points of view, and then suggests that the difference is between the literalist and the liberal, the literalist being one who interprets the Scriptures and the creeds by the letter; the liberal interprets the Scriptures and the

creeds by the spirit behind the letter. To the literalist religion is static, final and complete, recorded in the letter of the creed or the Bible. To the liberal revelation is vital, living, growing. New light is to break from the written Word of the past. The letter killeth, but behind the letter is the spirit that giveth life. "Today is the child of yesterday and the parent of tomorrow."

The issue begins with the theory of man's origin. Was it by fiat, special creation or progressive evolution? Last May, in the Presbyterian General Assembly, Mr. Bryan secured the reaffirmation of the five points of fundamentalism as "essential doctrines," the Inerrancy of the Bible, the Virgin Birth, the Substitutionary Theory of the Atonement, the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus, and the Validity of Miracles. Other communions, in stating the most important question under discussion, would agree with Dr. J. Frank Norris of Texas in saying, "War is declared—the Second Coming is the Issue."

GOD OR THE GORILLA

The origin of man has had a conspicuous place in this discussion. Is he a supernatural creation of God or is he the child of the brute? To the literalist it is either God or the gorilla, the inexorable choice between evolution and religion. He insists we cannot believe both in religion and scientific evolution. When a new professor was giving his first lecture in a small denominational college recently, he casually mentioned the word "Evolution." The entire class hissed and afterwards explained that they had been taught that evolution was atheism. Among a certain group it is repeatedly said, "There is no such thing as a Christian evolutionist." "Scientists are unbelievers." It must be God or the gorilla. To the liberal, scientifically trained, it is more nearly God *and* evolution. To him the story of Genesis is a parable of creation in the terms of the religious and scientific thinking of the age in which it was written.

The literalist insists that his opinion about the creation is essential to genuine discipleship and only on the basis of his creed can we believe in the divine origin of man. Behind this attitude, which seems to the liberal gro-

tesquely absurd, it should be remembered that the literalist is making the protest of ineradicably instinctive religion against an agnostic naturalism which would banish the spirit and leave us little more than the physical, crowding out all spiritual religion with the shallow empiricism which flowered in the insanities of Neitzsche and in the "sex-complex domination" of Freud. Both lovers of truth, the literalist fears to lose sacred truths in the past, the liberal fears to miss the new and larger truth he sees just ahead.

THE INERRANT BIBLE

Is the Bible a supernatural creation or is it a naturalistic literary evolution? The literalist believes that faith in the Bible as the word of God is dependent upon the conviction that every word is equally inspired and entirely without error of any kind, and that his theory of inspiration is an essential of the Christian religion.

In our Church Forum one Sunday night a young man asked, "If I am to believe that the Genesis creation story is not an exact scientific statement, but is a parable, how can I be sure of anything in the Bible?" He honestly believed that God could not speak through any literary form but exact prose history. He had forgotten that most of the deepest truths of the Bible are recorded in parables, allegory, poetry, and in forms where the imagination has the largest opportunity. The liberal declares that the Bible is inspired of God and is profitable for every spiritual and moral need but that much of it is to be interpreted spiritually and not literally. It truly records man's search for God and God's progressive revelation to man but it is not "an inerrant textbook of science and history but a sure guide of faith and conduct."

Dr. Gordon of the Old South Church, Boston, declared, "These Scriptures cover a thousand years and are of various degrees of value." In a striking phrase he insisted that verbal infallibility is nonsense except to those "who wear the green goggles of traditional orthodoxy"; then as a liberal who finds evidences for divine inspiration not in the letter of the Scripture but in the spirit behind the letter, he said, "This book in all its greater parts is food,

meat, and drink for the human soul," it "is our comfort, our guide, our support in life and in death." Each of these groups is seeking divine revelation by which to live victoriously. One sees it exclusively in the old, the other is sure there is also new light for the present and future.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Is this story of the supernatural birth of Jesus essential to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, or may it be interpreted as a parable? Here we find an attempt of Christian faith to explain the power of God which had been so manifestly at work in Jesus of Nazareth. Bishop Lawrence tells us "There is no essential connection between belief in the Virgin Birth and the Incarnation." Bishop Manning would be no less insistent that belief in the Virgin Birth is essential to belief in the Incarnation. Should the birth of Jesus, written in the terms of the knowledge of the first century, be restated in the terms of twentieth century knowledge? One man sees truth as a closed book in the past, the other sees it forever ahead, a progressive and enlarging revelation toward which we must climb. The one brings forth the old, the other brings forth the new from his treasury. We need both, but neither is the exclusive prophet of essential Christianity.

THE ATONEMENT

The more we know the more fully we realize that beyond our knowledge is vaster mystery. Our greatest mysteries are moral. In all the centuries Christians have sought to explain adequately the power of Jesus' life and death to cleanse men from sin. Each period has had its theories. Certain literalists have been convinced that no one could truly believe in Jesus as Saviour and in the transforming power of his cross, unless he accepts the letter of their noble seventeenth century creed. The creeds of the reformers restated the Christian faith in the terms of the science and philosophy of that period. In much of the Reformation theology the cross changes the heart of God from wrath to forgiveness and makes reconciliation possible. Twentieth century theology sees in

the cross that which changes the heart of the sinner and therefore makes reconciliation possible. The Fundamentalist believes that his theory of the atonement as substitutionary expiation is an essential of Christian faith. The liberal insists with equal fervor that the theory by which is explained the fact that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself[1] is not the essential so long as we are brought into oneness with God by the power of divine love revealed on the cross.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

In the Apostle's Creed we repeat, "I believe in the resurrection of the body." Probably the Christians of the third century believed as did the Egyptians that without the physical body the resurrection of the spirit was impossible. St. Paul evidently thought of the resurrection as a spiritual and not as a physical fact, the physical body is buried, "a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." The same problem arises concerning the Gospel stories of Jesus' resurrection. The literalist considers that any skepticism in regard to the literal accuracy of those stories is a denial of the fact of Jesus' triumph over death, and therefore a denial of his unbroken spiritual and moral fellowship over his disciples. The liberal does not believe that faith in the letter of the resurrection story of our Lord nor in the letter of the Apostle's Creed is essential to belief in the reality of the resurrection. Many liberals who believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus exactly as recorded in the fragmentary stories of the New Testament are no less insistent that that belief is not essential.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Here again the extreme conservative is apt to look almost entirely to the past for his revelation of truth and the extreme liberal often looks too largely to the future. In the ancient world men thought of history as a series of ages succeeding one another with abrupt suddenness, the ages of stone, of iron, of bronze, of silver and of gold were conceived as separate each from the other by great

[1] As in the Authorized and Revised Versions of the Bible pronouns referring to God and Christ are not in capitals.

catastrophies. The Hebrew thought of history in the same way as culminating in a Messianic conqueror suddenly to appear on the clouds. Dr. Harry Fosdick has said, "This is the Hebrew way of expressing hope for the victory of God and righteousness." The early Christians cherished the same view. St. Paul jubilantly wrote to the Thessalonians, "The Lord is at hand." Literally in the sense usually understood, the Lord did not come in fulfilment of the pictures in the New Testament. In that sense St. Paul's words to the Thessalonians were not fulfilled. Today important groups of earnest Christians hold that Christ is literally coming on the clouds of heaven, exactly as described in Jesus' discourse on the last things, in the book of Revelations and in the prophets. Other Christians equally devout think of history as a development, as a progress, in many cases one period unfolding into another without catastrophic division, God's will being worked out, but frequently coming without observation. Some Christians think of the vivid pictures of Christ's triumph in the Scriptures as symbolic and poetic attempts to portray spiritual facts far vaster and more wonderful than even so majestic a thing as a thunderstorm or an earthquake. The literalist not only believes in the letter of the creed and in the letter of the Scripture for himself, but demands that every other follower of Christ should believe that the immediate, literal, bodily second coming on the clouds is about to be realized.

THINGS OLD AND NEW

Both parties are wrong and yet both are right. Both the literalist with his passionate loyalty to the old and the liberal with his enthusiastic search for the new, have a contribution to make to our common religious thought and experience. The partisan literalist is certain that we must choose between the old and the new and he will choose the old; the partisan liberal is equally certain that we must choose between the old and the new, and he chooses the new. The Master's thought included both; he declared that it was the duty of the Christian to bring forth things new and old "if man was to have the full Gospel of the Kingdom." Most of the things which

divide Christians are due to diversities of custom and most of those are of significant value to the thinking and practice of the church but not essential, because many a genuine Christian life has been lived without them. They are not truly fundamental though they may have beauty and importance in the superstructure of the temple of Christian faith. Our controversies would lose much of their implacable bitterness if we could remember that the conservative and progressive points of view always have existed and always ought to; and that the true fundamental of Christianity is almost always deeper than the things about which Christ's followers usually differ.

WHAT IS ESSENTIAL CHRISTIANITY?

Principal Jacks of Oxford has reminded us that Christianity reduced to the simplest terms may be expressed in two words of Jesus, "Follow Me." "The religion of Jesus is the simplest and most difficult religion in the world." We ought to spend more time trying to follow Christ even if it compelled less time trying to explain Christ. To follow Christ is to imitate and obey him; so to live that we can say with St. Paul, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me."

To the question, "What is essential Christianity?" theology has made four misleading answers—an infallible Church, an infallible creed, an infallible Bible, or an infallible miraculous ceremony. The first and greatest of Christian theologians declared, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." A modern prophet and theologian with a similar insight has said, "If to be a Christian is to believe some basic thing about the universe and our relation to it, I can do that myself; if it is to join the one true Church, I can do that by myself; if it is to perform certain sacred rites, I can do that by myself; but if real Christianity means to reproduce in my life 'the spirit and quality of Jesus' I cannot do that by myself, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' " Let us enlarge that definition of essential Christianity to include the acts which inevitably spring from the possession of the spirit and the quality of Jesus and say that "Essen-

tial Christianity is that which reproduces in my life the spirit, the quality and the deeds of Jesus." This is essential Christianity with which discipleship must begin and without which all else is vain.

ENRICHING DIVERSITY WITH DYNAMIC UNITY

Both liberal and literalist have an indispensable contribution for our total Christianity. Without free discussion religion becomes unreasoned emotion, a prey to tyrannous and devitalizing superstition. We need not less discussion but more, not less independent difference of opinion but more; but we need less bitterness, less suspicion, less hostility and above all less egotism, whether it be that of opinionated liberalism or self-righteous literalism. In spite of divisive differences of opinion two men walking humbly with their Lord exemplifying his spirit, his quality, and his deeds will find it possible to maintain Christian fellowship. In unity of spirit, and in the bond of peace they can keep the things in which they differ subordinated to the task which rests upon all disciples to make the spirit of Jesus dominant in their own lives and by example and testimony persuade others to dare the same supreme adventure of the human spirit. Thus we may agree, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity."

II: WHAT ARE THE FUNDAMENTALS?

SHERWOOD EDDY

FIVE ESSENTIALS

Could we not agree that anything that is a real fundamental will have to fulfill three conditions? Was it something that Jesus himself emphasized and counted fundamental? Is it central to Christian experience today? Is it capable of repeated verification? If anything can fulfill these three conditions we may agree that it is fundamental. If, on the other hand, it is something which Jesus never mentioned, external, material, mechanical; which makes no real difference to our present experience, and which can never be proved or disproved, then we shall not count it fundamental.

Could we agree upon the following five points which would seem to be truly fundamental, and upon which most Modernists and Fundamentalists could unite if they would?

I. An inspired Word of God through which we come to know God the loving Father, God himself being our first fundamental.

II. Jesus' way of life, his example, his teaching, his call to come and follow him.

III. A risen, living, divine Saviour, saving men and giving them eternal life.

IV. The eternal principle of sacrifice, grounded in the very nature of God, springing from the heart of God who so loved that he gave, consummated in the cross of Christ and his vicarious death, and continued in us who are called to deny ourselves, take up our cross of sacrifice, and follow Jesus in his way of life.

V. The law of love consummated in the coming of the Kingdom of God which is the sovereignty of love in all the relations of life.

Here are five things that Jesus taught, emphasized. and re-emphasized. They are central in Christian experience today. They are capable of repeated verification in that experience. They are vital to true religion which may be defined as the life of God in the soul of man, shared with his fellow-men.

Can any true follower of Jesus deny that all these things are fundamental? If so, instead of wasting our strength fighting with each other about other matters, could we not agree at least upon these great essentials, follow Jesus' way in a life of love, and go out and win the world for him? If a man heartily and with his whole soul believes in all these five great essentials, should we brand him as an "atheist," an unbeliever, a heretic; try to put him out of the church, and waste our strength in fighting against a brother for whom Christ died? The disciples said, "Lord, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him because he followed not us." Jesus said, "Forbid him not." Even though a brother follows not *us,* if he follows Christ and is loyal to these five great essentials, can we not—differing with him though we must in many minor or even important matters—work together in love for the coming of the Kingdom of God? We do not say that these five are the only essentials and that nothing else matters, but we do claim that these are fundamental and that one who earnestly holds them is a Christian and should not be treated with hatred or contempt, whatever his school of thought.

Now upon all the above five essentials many of us are agreed.

I. *An inspired Word of God through which we come to know God the loving Father.*

The writer believes that the Bible is inspired by God to bring us into vital relation with himself as he is revealed in his Son Jesus Christ; that it is a great central revelation of moral and spiritual truth whereby we may come to know God through Christ, and believing, may have life in him. Speaking for himself, the writer for thirty years has formed the habit of beginning each day with the devotional study of the word of God, of drinking

of this fountain of living waters to quench the thirst of his soul. Through this means he has come to know God as the loving Father, as Jesus revealed him, and has found God himself to be the central certainty, the great reality, the source of the priceless spiritual experience of his life.

II. *Jesus' way of life.*

Modernists or Fundamentalists, both of us believe in Jesus' way of life, the things he emphasized and taught and repeated, the way he lived, his clear call to come and follow him. We agree that no empty profession, no words, no shibboleths, no correct doctrines nor outward orthodoxy can avail if we are denying Jesus' way of life. "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do* not the things which I say?" "Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, but he that *doeth* the will of my father who is in heaven." "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, *do* ye even so to them." No true Christian can deny Jesus' way of life, and that it is fundamental. It is central to our daily experience; its truth is capable of repeated verification.

No one can deny, also, that there is need of emphasizing Jesus' way of life today. We have seen the Church in Czarist Russia, "orthodox," demanding correct scriptural doctrine, earnest in its worship yet failing to apply its doctrine in consistent daily living. As a result, repudiating the caricature of religion presented by the Church we have seen an avowedly atheist government rejecting religion altogether. We have seen the Church in Germany laying great emphasis upon the necessity for correct doctrine yet often failing to apply these principles in daily life until the great masses of labor, unsought, unshepherded, unwon, became materialistic, Marxian, indifferent or hostile to a dead and correct orthodoxy without vital contact with the masses of the people. We have seen too many Christians in America worshipping on Sunday, professing all the conventional creeds and correct beliefs but denying them in their industrial, commercial and political life. "Patriotism is not enough." Orthodoxy is not enough. Fundamentalism is not enough. Modernism is not enough. Party cries are not enough. "By quarrelling I mean that each of you has his party

cry, 'I belong to Paul,' 'And I belong to Apollos,' 'And I to Cephas,' 'And I to Christ.' Has Christ been parcelled out? . . . Brothers, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ I beg of you all to drop these party cries There must be no cliques among you; you must regain your common temper and attitude."[1]

III. *A risen, living, divine Saviour, saving men and giving them eternal life.*

I believe in Jesus Christ, in his divinity and in his deity, as manifested in the moral and spiritual attributes of his character. I believe in his true humanity, but that we see the "very God of very God" manifest in this truly human life. His was the human life of God, the divine life of man. He is the image of the invisible God, the revelation of the Father. Here we see God and come to the great discovery that God is like Jesus. Think of the character of Jesus, how strong, pure and loving—how Godlike he was. Recall the moral altitude of his teaching of God as Father, of man as brother, of duty as the revealed will of God, of destiny realized in his Kingdom. Think again of his unique relation both to God and to man. Here is one who is able to bring God to man and man to God, who is both Son of God and Son of Man, the supreme revelation of God and the Saviour of humanity, the touchstone of destiny, the standard of judgment, and the hope of eternal life. Think then of the historic effects of his life, whether or not he has fulfilled his claims and has made God real to multitudes of men. Recall the effects of his life on society, the signal influence of his life and teaching on the abolition of slavery, on the uplift of childhood, womanhood, manhood; the healing of the sick, the relief of the poor, the realization of social justice, the education of the ignorant, the saving of the sinful. Think of the strong contrasts and paradoxes of his life in which he transcends his limitations and his environment and stands unique and alone in human history.

Then let us contemplate the vast temple of human knowledge, and see if he is not indeed the keystone of the otherwise broken and incomplete arch of science, philosophy, art, morality, religion, and of all human experi-

[1] I Corinthians 1:10–12, Moffatt's Translation.

ence. Let us put his claims to the proof and see if he meets the test of personal experience for the past, the present and the future. Who then is this? Can we deny that God was in him in some unique way? And as he questions us like Simon Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" are we not constrained to reply with Simon, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God"?

IV. *The eternal principle of sacrifice*, grounded in the very nature of God, springing from the heart of God who so loved that he gave, consummated in the cross of Christ and his vicarious death, and continued in us who are called to deny ourselves, take up our cross of sacrifice, and follow Jesus in his way of life.

We can all agree that love, in order to save the loved one who is sinful, must suffer and in the end must sacrifice its life even unto death. We do not believe in a loving Christ seeking to propitiate an angry God or satisfy his abstract justice; but that this law of sacrifice springs from the very heart of God himself, that God the loving Father who had all along loved us and had been bearing our sin on his own heart, so loved the world that he gave himself in Jesus Christ, and that in his cross we see God, as it were, turning the other cheek to sinful humanity. We believe that Jesus gave his life for us, and that the eternal law of suffering is consummated in his vicarious cross. We believe that the death of Christ is not some legal fiction or transaction whereby, upon our intellectual acceptance, we gain the privilege of living a selfish life assured of future salvation. We believe that salvation implies entering into God's redemptive purpose for the world, and sharing in his service of love to seek and to save the lost. We believe that Jesus calls everyone who would follow him to utterly deny himself, and to live his way of love, of sacrifice, and of suffering to save others. Nearly all of us can agree upon this fourth great spiritual fundamental, however we may differ upon the words and phrases we use in stating a particular theory of the death of Christ. We agree upon the great fact of the atonement. No human mind has ever been able adequately so to state the theory of it that all could agree upon it. In the New Testament itself neither

Jesus nor his followers ever attempt to give a full, formal, final statement of one particular theory.

V. *The law of love, consummated in the coming of the Kingdom of God, which is the sovereignty of love in all relations of life.*

Fundamentalists and Modernists alike must agree that love was a great essential to Jesus. He lived it, he taught it, he gave it as his first great fundamental. Primitive Christianity was not a correct doctrine but a new way of life, a life of love. Jesus calls us, as the first and great commandment, to love God and love one another, and by this shall all men know we are his disciples. Surely mutual recriminations, accusations, misrepresentations, hatred, and exclusion of other followers of Jesus, who all earnestly and cordially agree upon these five fundamentals, are not true to his teaching and example of love. "Now abideth faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love." Whatever our school of thought let us each ask, is love fundamental in my life? Am I exercising love toward men of other schools of thought who differ from me?

We all agree that Jesus emphasized the Kingdom of God, and taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." The Kingdom of God was fundamental to him. Can it be less so to us? We may not know the day nor the hour, we may not be able to dogmatize as to the times or the seasons, the manner or the method of the coming of that Kingdom; but like seed that is silently growing, like leaven that is spreading, this Kingdom that is "already in your midst" is surely coming in God's own time and way.

Now if a man believes passionately in these five great essentials; if he loves God his Father with all his heart, and is drinking daily at the fountain of his inspired Word; if he is honestly and earnestly seeking to follow Jesus' way of life; if he believes in him as a risen, living, loving Saviour, and that in him is eternal life, now and forever; if he is a saved man seeking to save others, believing in Jesus' vicarious death, seeking to bear his cross and follow him in winning others to him; if he manifestly shares his love, and is praying and working for the

coming of his Kingdom, whatever his school of thought may be, is he not a Christian? If he holds earnestly to these things which Jesus taught and emphasized, which are central to Christian experience, and capable of repeated verification by all who share that experience, shall we count all this which Jesus emphasized as nought and cast out this brother as an unbeliever? Shall we hate him and misrepresent him? Shall we turn to fight him, whether he be a Fundamentalist or a Modernist, instead of seeking to save others? Did Jesus ever emphasize correct opinion or conventional orthodoxy as the test of true discipleship; or was his test that of loving obedience in doing the things that he said?

THE FUNDAMENTALISTS

Those who count themselves Fundamentalists today maintain, among other things, five essentials:

I. An inerrant, infallible, verbally inspired Bible.
II. The virgin birth of Christ.
III. His bodily resurrection.
IV. The blood atonement.
V. The second coming of Christ in person to reign on earth. Let us examine these one by one.

I. *An inerrant, infallible, verbally inspired Bible.*

We are all agreed that we have an inspired Word of God through which we find God the loving Father, and Christ as the divine Saviour. Whether the Bible is inerrant, infallible, and verbally inspired in every word is a simple question of fact that can be tested by examination. After study we find here sixty-six varying books of prose and poetry, history, law, prophecy, biography, and letters, written by many writers over long periods of time. All of us are agreed upon an inspired Word of God; but the question is, is it a book mechanically inspired, finished, complete, let down, as it were, from heaven in a perfect encyclopedic revelation of all truth in science, history, literature, things sacred and secular; or is it a gradual, progressive revelation of the truth of God, revealed as men were able to receive it? In the Old Testament we find slavery, polygamy, the slaughter of enemies, and

lower moral standards. We find some of these not only practiced but commanded, as in the merciless slaughter of enemies, or exemplified in the imprecatory psalms which go almost beyond the atrocities of the late war.[1] Jesus, on the contrary, teaches that God is love, that we are to love our enemies, that we are not to resist him who is evil, that God numbers the hairs of our head and marks the sparrow's fall. Are both equally inspired? If so, which should we follow today?

As a matter of fact, is the Bible inerrant, infallible, free from mistakes, recording accurately and infallibly the very words of Jesus just as he uttered them? For instance, to take one of many cases, in Matthew 27:9 the writer quotes "the word spoken by the prophet Jeremiah," but we find no such verse in Jeremiah. It is found in Zechariah 11:13. Or take the sayings of Jesus. If you cannot find a single saying of his of three or four lines in extent that is given in the same words in any two gospels, if every saying that he uttered is given in different words in the different gospels, which one of the four shall we take as inerrant, infallible, and verbally inspired?

Did Jesus anywhere teach that we have an inerrant, infallible, verbally inspired Bible? Is such a view capable of verification? If not, is it fundamental; or can we agree upon the essential fact of an inspired Word of God to teach us moral and spiritual truth, and the guidance of the Spirit leading us on into all truth?

The primary object of the Bible is not to teach grammar or geography, history or science, law or poetry. It is not intended as a storehouse of authoritative proof-texts or pious mottoes, not as a shibboleth, or a fetish. It has one clear purpose. It is a means of life; a means, not an end. We must remember also that Jesus Christ is the touchstone and test of the whole. By his standard all parts of the Bible must be judged. Jesus himself criticized the Old Testament and is our authority for judging its moral teaching in the light of his own. There are over a hundred thousand variations in the readings of the oldest and best manuscripts of the New Testament. Nowhere does the Bible make the claim of infallibility

[1] Psalm 109:9–15.

nor was this claim ever made for it until the fourth century. Luther and many other equally devout and intelligent men never held this view of inerrancy. We must not forget that almost every wrong in the past has in turn been justified by proof-texts from the Bible, whether of witchcraft, slavery, the inquisition, or other evils and superstitions. And it is equally true that almost every radical advance in science has been opposed by those who held traditional theories about the Bible.

The Bible remains the unique possession of the human race. It is a divinely inspired, human record of the progressive revelation of God's perfect truth to imperfect, developing men. Its inspiration is vital, however, and not mechanical. It is the most honest, ingenuous, frank, self-evidencing book in the world. It establishes its own authority. It is a very fountain of living waters, a means of life, a channel of the most priceless experience in human history.

II. *The virgin birth of Christ.*

We do not for a moment deny the virgin birth of Christ. We only ask whether or not it is fundamental. If Jesus never even refers to it, if it is never mentioned by Paul in his epistles, nor by Mark, in the earliest of the four gospels, nor in the last gospel; if clear reference to it is confined to two passages, the earliest of which was written fifty years after Jesus' death, is it necessarily fundamental? The test of Jesus was not by origin but "by their fruits ye shall know them." What was it that made Jesus divine? Was it that he was removed from us by a miraculous birth, or was it that he was truly divine in his character, in his moral and spiritual attributes, and that in his life we see God? Did his divinity consist in what he was, or in the way he was born? If equally good Christians, both earnestly believing in his divinity and in his deity; but some believing that he was born miraculously, and others that he was born as we were, but that truly Mary was over-shadowed by the Holy Spirit, and that God entered the world in a human life through a natural birth, and left it through a natural death,—if equally good Christians with equally spiritual and fruit-

ful lives are divided as to the manner of his birth, can we excommunicate and cast out those who do not agree with us? Can we claim that this is a foremost fundamental if, as we have seen, it has never been mentioned by Jesus or Paul, or in the first or last gospel?

III. *His bodily resurrection.*

We are all agreed upon the fact of the resurrection. He was crucified in weakness, his followers were scattered in despair, it seemed that Christianity had died with Christ. Shortly after we see a whole united Christian community, triumphant, rejoicing, fearless, and assured; affirming that Jesus was alive, that they knew the risen Christ, that they had found eternal life in him; going out to meet dungeon, fire, and sword, to win the world for him. What happened, that the whole Christian body of believers who had seen him crucified in shame, rose up to affirm that he was alive, that he was Lord and Master, that he was God manifest in the flesh? Upon the fact of the resurrection, Modernists and Fundamentalists can agree, but can we place emphasis upon the one word "bodily"? An historical event taking place nineteen centuries ago, such as the virgin birth or the bodily resurrection, can in the nature of the case never be proved nor disproved. It is a matter of faith or of dogma. We do not deny the bodily resurrection, we only ask, is this the fundamental fact? "The flesh profiteth nothing; it is the spirit that giveth life." To many of us it seems that it is the spiritual fact of the resurrection that matters, not the nature of his material body nor the emphasis upon the material, the physical, and the external. Did Jesus emphasize the word "bodily"? Is it central in our experience? Is it capable of verification? If not, is the physical body or the spiritual resurrection the real fundamental?

IV. *The blood atonement.*

Christians are agreed, for the most part, upon the great law of sacrifice, consummated in the vicarious death of Christ upon the cross; but we are not agreed as to a particular theory of the atonement. Are we required to believe that God as a just Judge demanded the punish-

ment of an innocent victim by the shedding of physical blood, and that the acceptance of this transaction by the mental assent of the believer gives him the assurance of future salvation without the necessity of following Jesus' way of life or of applying his gospel in his daily life? Many who have most insisted upon a substitutionary theory of the atonement have denied Jesus' way of life in their unchristian practices in business, in politics, and in daily life. Is the real fundamental a correct belief in a particular theory of atonement by physical blood, or is it the acceptance of the free forgiveness of God in Jesus' laying down his life for us and calling each to follow him in bearing his own cross and living out this fundamental principle of sacrifice in daily life? Did Jesus emphasize or ever teach a particular doctrine about the atonement? Is it a particular theory that is central in our Christian experience, or is it the spirit of sacrifice? Is any particular theory of the atonement capable of verification in experience? Are those who hold this particular theory the only ones who are manifesting the first fruits of the Spirit which are love, joy, and peace; and are they alone extending the Kingdom of God?

V. *The second coming of Christ in person to reign on earth.*

We are all agreed on the great fundamental of love, and on the coming of the Kingdom of God. We differ as to the times and seasons, the method and the manner of the fulfillment of prophecy. Take, for instance, a few verses from the gospels. According to the record in Mark 13:1–6 and Luke 21:5–7, when Jesus was speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem he said that the temple should be thrown down, and there should be left not one stone upon another. That prophecy was fulfilled in that generation in 70 A. D. The writer of the first gospel differs in his report of what Jesus said on this occasion and adds, "Tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" He then adds, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man

coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now from the fig tree learn her parable: when her branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh; even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that he is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished."[1] "Verily I say unto you, There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."[2] "But when they persecute you in this city, flee into the next: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come."[3] Plainly here is a difficulty. The bodily, speedy second coming of Jesus and the end of the world did not take place in that generation while some of those standing there remained alive and before that little missionary journey in the cities of Israel was finished. In the later records of the fourth gospel his coming is promised in the Comforter, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It is no longer conceived as his coming on the clouds of heaven in that generation, but to take his own to the many mansions prepared for them in the life beyond. What view is correct, which teaching has been fulfilled?

Is this saying the latest premillennial word? "Our earth is degenerate in these latter days. There are signs that the world is speedily coming to an end. Children no longer obey their parents. The end of the world is evidently approaching." This is not the latest word of premillennial prophecy. This is the inscription on an Assyrian tablet which is now on exhibition in the museum at Constantinople. Its date is 2800 B. C. It was written 4,724 years ago, or long before Abraham was born. And for the last four thousand seven hundred years men have been saying that the end was at hand, that it was coming "speedily."

[1] See Matthew 24: 3, 14, 30–34. [2] Matthew 16: 28.
[3] Matthew 10: 23.

For ourselves, frankly we do not know. We do not deny the second coming. We only say we are sure of the great fundamental of love, and of the coming of the Kingdom of God. Did Jesus with certainty himself say he was coming in that generation, while some of them who stood there were living, or before that missionary journey had ended; or was it a misunderstanding of the writer? Apparently someone has made a mistake. We may twist the passages one by one into line with our own theory, and then excommunicate all who differ from us; but would it not be better to unite on Jesus' great essential of love, to seek together the coming of his Kingdom, instead of trying to put out all those who differ from us as to the times and seasons, the method or manner of Christ's coming?

FIVE CONFLICTS BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

The present conflict between science and theology over the question of evolution is only the last of at least five great issues that have arisen between them.

I. The first was between the conception of a flat or a round earth. Those who maintained the inerrancy of Scripture contended that there was no warrant for a round world. Augustine contended that to hold that there were dwellers upon the other side of the earth was contrary to Scripture. Then Columbus, although bitterly opposed by ecclesiastical authorities and church leaders, made his great experiment in his voyage across the western ocean. Finally the fleet of Magellan completed the circumnavigation of the globe, and modern science was vindicated against a literal interpretation of certain texts of Scripture in the mistaken belief that the Bible was intended as an infallible guide in matters of science and secular knowledge.

II. The second controversy was as to whether the sun or the earth was the center of our solar system. The leading ecclesiastical authorities, and those who held to a literal interpretation of the Scripture, bitterly opposed the theory that the earth moved around the sun. Copernicus, in his great discovery of 1543, was condemned by the Inquisition although he held his views in secret for

thirty-six years because of the opposition of the ecclesiastical leaders. In 1610 Galileo proved that the theory of Copernicus was right. He was condemned for "blasphemy and atheism" for saying that the Scripture was not a scientific authority, but a moral guide. He was imprisoned by the Inquisition for ten years and refused burial in consecrated ground; but though he was compelled to recant upon his knees, the earth moved just the same. Science was vindicated, and the outworn medieval theory based upon a literal interpretation of Scripture not only went down to defeat, but estranged many from the faith.

Luther said: "People gave ear to an upstart astrologer who strove to show that the earth revolves, not the heavens or the firmament, the sun and the moon. Whoever wishes to appear clever must devise some new system, which of all systems is, of course, the very best. This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy, but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth." How similar was the great Luther's well meaning but futile attack to those who oppose evolution today on scriptural grounds.

III. The third great issue came with the discovery of the law of gravitation by Newton, based upon Kepler's three laws of motion. The discovery was condemned by the ecclesiastical authorities as "natural law." The theologians opposed Newton in his day just as they did Darwin in a later period. One result of this blind opposition to the law of gravitation was the growth of skepticism during the eighteenth century under Voltaire and others who might have been won by a more rational faith in harmony with the discoveries of science. Again the literalists lost the battle, and thousands were estranged from the Christian faith by their mistaken and fruitless opposition to science.

IV. The next controversy was between the discoveries of geology and the conventional orthodox chronology established in 1650 by Archbishop Usher. Dr. Lightfoot of Cambridge maintained that creation had taken place 4004 B. C., on October 23, at nine o'clock in the morning. The followers of this supposed view of literal Scripture

orthodoxy bitterly opposed the discoveries of geology which traced back the history of the earth through millions of years, and showed that the antiquity of man was far greater than the system of chronology supposed to be based upon Scripture. Again modern science won, and ecclesiastical orthodoxy was defeated. Once again many were estranged from the faith.

V. The fifth issue was over the question of evolution. As in the four preceding issues, theology had crystallized around an outworn scientific view.[1]

The two theories of special creation by divine decree and by gradual evolution were almost equally old, and both were held by the ancient Greeks. It was not until the sixteenth century that the orthodox church leaders adopted as authoritative the theory of special creation by divine decree, and the literal interpretation of the account in Genesis of a world made in six days of twenty-four hours each, of woman made out of the rib of a man, and of God resting on the seventh day.

Darwin's original theory of natural selection was finally found to be inadequate to account for all the facts, but the theory of evolution has been supported by an overwhelming mass of evidence. Nearly all modern scientists are agreed upon this theory. Every human being begins life as a single cell, and comes up through the lower stages of being to the full height of a moral person. Burbank is manipulating the great law of evolution before our eyes, and actually making new species of plants and fruits every year. Followers of De Vries have produced hundreds of new species in the animal kingdom. Suppose we conceive of evolution to be simply the way of God's working. All evolution points toward God who made us through a natural process. If, as Mr. H. H. Lane in his "Evolution and Christian Faith" points out, gravitation be only the divine mode of sustentation, and evolution the divine mode of creation; if evolution is God's way of working in nature, and Christianity his way of working

[1] See H. H. Lane's "Evolution and Christian Faith" for a full discussion of the conflicts between science and theology, and Andrew D. White's "A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom," 2 vols., 1896.

in the spiritual world; if we are all agreed that it is God's world and he is in the whole process from beginning to end; what difference does it make whether the world was created in a moment of time, in six days of twenty-four hours each, or through a long and noble process of gradual evolution?

Can we reconcile the first chapter of Genesis with modern science? We simply do not try to reconcile them. If we turn to the first verse we read: "In the beginning—God"! Here is the divinely inspired spiritual truth that it is God's world and that in it he has a supreme purpose of good. Then we read on through that opening poem containing a beautiful picture of a world described as created in six days each with its evening and morning. In no sense is the account scientific and by no conceivable stretch of the imagination can it truly be made so. The Bible is a marvelous book of poetry, prose, history, geography, cosmogony and a hundred other things, but for none of these things was it written. Its one central purpose was that believing, we might have life. To force it to do duty as science, history, geography, astronomy, geology, etc., is to repeat the catastrophe of those who have opposed science by Scripture from the days of Augustine to the present.

In all the five conflicts between science and theology orthodox theologians believing in a literal interpretation of Scripture have opposed science. In each case they have not only been defeated, but thousands have been estranged from the faith who might have been won if confronted with a rational faith, fully in harmony with modern science. Once we realize that the Bible is a gradual revelation of God's truth, that it is given as a guide in moral and spiritual matters, not as an authoritative textbook in science, we shall see that there can be no conflict between true science and true religion. The only conflict is between an unbelieving science and an unscientific belief. If some insist upon saying we must take evolution, or else a literal, orthodox Christianity based on an inerrant, verbally inspired, infallible Book, then tens of thousands of students of modern science will accept evolution because of the overwhelming mass of

evidence, and will reject a literalist interpretation of faith based upon an outworn, impossible, unscientific conception of the world.

A number of earnest Christians at present look upon the doctrine of evolution as calculated to overthrow faith. We are forced, however, to take our choice between the modern view of the world on the one hand, and the ancient or medieval view on the other. Writing on August 29, 1922, to Professor Curtis of the University of Missouri, Woodrow Wilson said, "Of course like every other man of sense and education, I do believe in organic evolution. It surprises me at this late date that such questions should be raised."

Many Christians still retain a medieval world view in whole or in part. According to this earlier view the earth was the center of the universe. The sun revolved around the earth and the "firmament" was a solid dome from which the stars were hung. The earth was flat with its "four corners"; heaven was just above and hell below us. The world was made in six days, and was ruled by absolute divine decrees.

But this old world view was forever shattered for students of modern science. Astronomy showed our earth as one of the smallest of the planets, revolving around our sun as one of the smallest of the stars in a boundless universe. Later geology and kindred sciences pushed back the six days of creation to a record of more than six hundred million years of evolving life upon our planet. Biology next traced the development of man as part of a vast evolution of life from simple to complex forms. Historical criticism subjected the Bible to the same scientific examination as all other books and showed its progressive historical development, comparing with it similar stories of creation, the flood, etc., found among the nations surrounding the Jews. The study of Comparative Religions discovered whole ranges of truth in other faiths and the question was asked if this truth was all "from the devil." Next came "the revolt of the modern conscience" against supposedly divine decrees condemning to eternal punishment multitudes of men even before their birth, together with the great bulk of mankind who had never had the

opportunity of hearing the Christian message. Finally the World War broke down many of the old customs and creeds and forced men who dared to do so to rethink their position.

A Christian today must take his choice between the medieval and the modern view of the world. Fortunately his personal religious experience can be real and deep whether his view of science be medieval or modern. It is a privilege, however, to have a joyous vital Christian experience coupled with a rational faith in harmony with science.

Thirty-three years ago the writer began to make this transition to the modern viewpoint. All the deepest spiritual experiences of his life have come to him in connection with this view. It is not some new departure. It has been the foundation for all his evangelistic work. He has found the gladness of a rational and joyous faith, an inspired Word of God, a loving God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, a divine and risen Saviour, a spiritual experience that has quenched the thirst of his soul, and a message of evangelism that is able to save men.

Let us gladly receive the revelation of God's truth in his word and in his world, in religion and in science. We shall find one majestic process culminating in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ and in the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Thus through all the ages one increasing purpose runs, and love is found, creation's final law. Thus "receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken," we accept God's truth through the gradual, developing, evolutionary revelation of himself in religion and science alike. Can not Modernists and Fundamentalists, liberals and literalists alike maintain, "in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity"?

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